



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
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Ag Statistics Hotline: 1-800-727-9540 • www.usda.gov/nass/



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Media Contact: Janet Allen (202) 690-8122
janet.allen@nass.usda.gov
Public Contact: Maria Bynum (202) 720-5192
maria.bynum@usda.gov

WHY IS THE CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE IMPORTANT TO YOU?

WASHINGTON, Jan. 1, 2003 - Farmers and ranchers across the Nation are completing report forms to make sure they are counted in the 2002 Census of Agriculture. Conducted by the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the census takes place only once every five years. It serves as the Nation's only uniform, comprehensive information source on agriculture production, inventories, sales and expenses for all states and counties.

The census is vital to agriculture for many reasons. For example:

- S Farmers and ranchers** use census data to spot trends that will help them decide which crops to grow or livestock to raise.
- S Farm organizations** use the results to develop farm programs and policies.
- S Congress** uses the information to develop or change farm legislation.
- S USDA** uses the information to establish programs and determine eligibility.
- S Agribusinesses** use census of agriculture county data to identify sales territories and the most effective locations for retail and service outlets.
- S Farm journalists and broadcasters** use census data to provide factual stories about agriculture and evaluate current issues affecting farmers and ranchers.

For anyone with a stake in agriculture, census data are the best sources of information on farmland use, acres harvested by type of crop, value of products sold, acres treated with fertilizers and pesticides, number and types of livestock raised and sold, cost of fuels and energy consumed, interest expenses, value of machinery and equipment, farm labor, direct sales, number of hired workers, and much more. First-time census data will include computer and Internet use, production contracts, characteristics of multiple operators per farm, more specialized livestock data, grain storage capacity and certified organic acreage.

Because of its importance to our Nation, the law (Title 7, U.S. Code) requires every person who receives a report form to answer the census whether they currently farm or not. This same law protects the privacy of the individual responses. Census responses are strictly confidential. They may be seen only by NASS employees and are used only for statistical purposes. Even copies retained by individual farmers and ranchers are immune from legal process.

Completed 2002 Census of Agriculture report forms are due Feb. 3, 2003. For help completing the form, a convenient toll free number is available, 1-888-4AG-STAT. If you raised agricultural products, or normally would, and did not receive a form you can call the toll-free number to ensure you are counted. Census results will be released on Feb. 3, 2004. Results from previous censuses and hundreds of current agricultural statistics may be found at www.usda.gov/nass/. By responding to the census, every farmer and rancher will help **make it known – agriculture counts!**

NOTE TO EDITORS: For background information and sample 2002 Census report forms, and for data from the last Census, visit www.nass.usda.gov/census/. Public service announcements, news releases, editorials and similar materials may be found by clicking on “Help Us Promote the 2002 Census” or by calling 1-800-727-9540 or by contacting your local State Statistical Office at www.usda.gov/nass/ under “State Information.”